THE LEMON GROVE REVIEW

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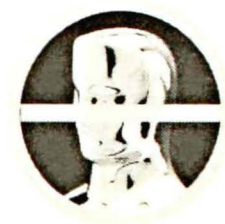
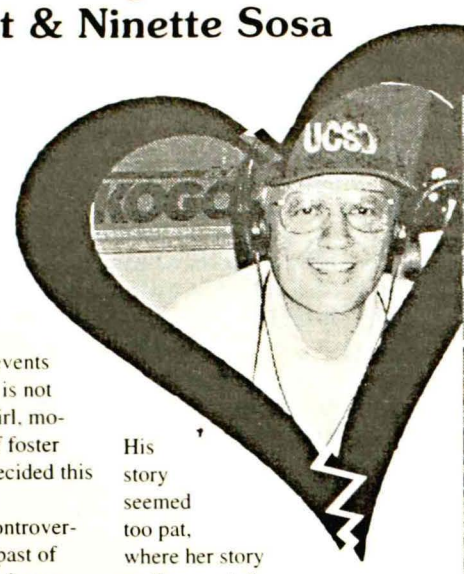
IN THIS ISSUE

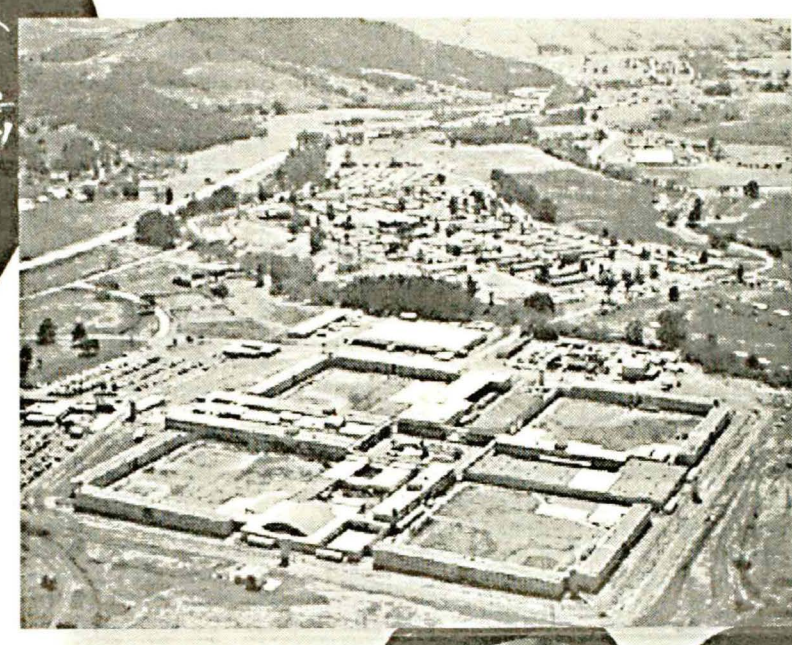
Vote for The Easties!



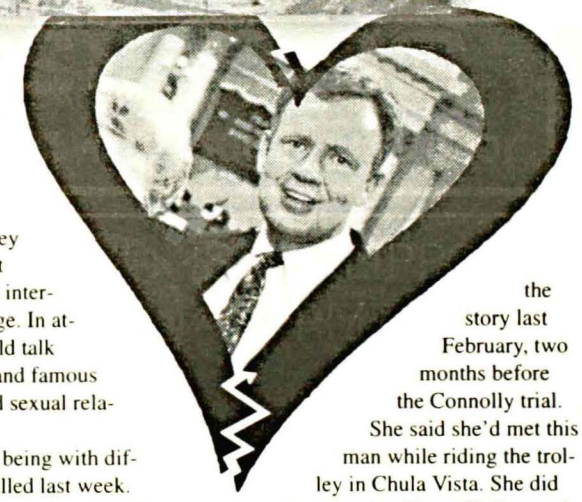
Connolly's Last Valentine

by Steven Saint & Ninette Sosa





Former state Assemblyman Tom Connolly is currently serving time in the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo.



It was around Valentine's Day two years ago that a 14-year-old runaway named Tanya told authorities she had performed oral copulation on former state Assemblyman Tom Connolly in return for a hotel room.

Why Tanya had waited until February to press charges about events that occurred four months earlier is not clear. It is also unclear why the girl, molested as a child and in and out of foster homes and street life for years, decided this particular incident "was wrong."

What is clear is Connolly, a controversial attorney dogged by a sordid past of drug addiction, wild sex and failed marriages, is currently imprisoned at the California Men's Colony near San Luis Obispo for a crime he still insists he didn't commit.

If he's paying attention to his church's feast days, he might find some strange comfort in the story of St. Valentine. Valentine, a Catholic priest, was thrown into prison by Roman Emperor Claudius II in the year 270 for preaching the Christian faith. Legend has it that while in prison, he befriended and eventually cured the jailer's blind daughter.

Led to his execution on Feb. 14, he managed to leave the girl a farewell note signed, "from your Valentine."

Tom Connolly was convicted last May for having oral sex with a minor. Connolly maintains the girl had a black eye and swollen cheek when they crossed paths outside a National City restaurant. She needed a place to stay, so he got her a room in a nearby motel and left. They met again by chance three weeks later when he was assigned to be her public defender in juvenile court.

Connolly says that Tanya, perhaps mistaking him for one of her paying customers, insisted that they had "dated." The trial was strictly a matter of his word against hers, as there were no witnesses.

The jury believed the girl.

Connolly is appealing the conviction, and 1,300 pages of trial transcripts and police reports are now available. Attorney Jon Pettis of Lemon Grove is arguing that the judge unfairly biased the jury by allowing a prostitute named Michelle Roman testify about encounters with Connolly 10 years ago.

To be sure, the jury never heard about Tanya's past. While testimony alluded to her runaway street life, her paternal grandmother was not called as a witness, neither was her recent foster mother, quite familiar with her tendency to fabricate and brag about sexual exploits with famous people.

Would more information about the girl's past have affected the jury's decision? As it stands, her nervous, contradictory testimony was taken as a sign of truthfulness.

"She was unsure about exact dates and times, just like you'd expect a 14-year-old to be," said first-time juror Rafael Martinez outside the courtroom after the verdict. "Connolly has an answer for everything. His story seemed too pat, where her story really wasn't."

The Girl the Jury Didn't Know

Tanya is a minor with legal rights to privacy. She could not be reached for comment through the state attorney general's office, the agency that investigated the case. Lora Fox Martin, the deputy who prosecuted Connolly, said that the trial was an ordeal for Tanya and to discuss it further would be "really cruel."

Sommer Prindle, however, has known Tanya since early 1995, when a group of girls was brought home by Sommer's mother, Lynn Prindle. The elder Prindle had found the girls hitchhiking and decided to pick them up before somebody else did.

She wanted Sommer to give the girls a stern warning about the hazards of street life. Sommer, then 20 years old, had a fair grasp of what the girls were going through. She had been a teen mother who managed to finish high school at Mark Twain Continuation, elected student body president in 1993.

Sommer gave each of the girls her phone number and a quarter, inviting them to call her any time they needed help.

Several weeks later, Tanya called. She needed a place to stay. Sommer invited her over, but soon learned Tanya was not 17 years old as she claimed. She was, in fact, 13, a runaway from the Polinsky Children's Center.

"I turned her in," Sommer said, concerned about the legality of harboring a runaway. "I felt sorry for Tanya. I understand her situation."

Tanya was placed back in the home of her paternal grandmother, but kept calling Sommer. Prindle visited her in Clairemont and was shocked by the grandmother's abusive treatment. Tanya eventually sought asylum at the Prindle home and by June, Sommer and Lynn were her official guardians.

They laid down some ground rules for Tanya, including a 10 p.m. curfew, no men or boyfriends allowed in the house, and no unprotected sex.

Sommer told the attorney general's investigators that Tanya didn't know how to interact with people her own age. In attempts to belong, she would talk about her sexual exploits and famous people with whom she had sexual relations.

"She would brag about being with different men," Sommer recalled last week. "She once said she was seeing a manager at Planet Hollywood. It turned out he wasn't the manager, he just worked there."

Sommer said Tanya had chlamydia, a venereal disease of epidemic proportions distinguished by the fact that half the carriers suffer no symptoms. The girl was reluctant to go to a doctor, but pledged not to spread it by only having protected sex. Prindle believed Tanya was engaging in prostitution ("going on the track") because of the frequent male callers and money that would suddenly show up at the house.

Finally, Prindle caught Tanya breaking the curfew rule in the garage at 3 a.m., drinking beer with eight boys, including Prindle's 17-year-old brother, Michael. She suspected other rules were being broken when an angry wife called to confront Tanya about giving her husband chlamydia.

Apparently Tanya had paged the man when his wife was present to note the number. Sommer said Tanya denied she had a sexual relationship with the man, then later claimed he had forced her to have oral sex. After Sommer threatened her with police intervention, she said Tanya confessed she'd slept with the man but lied about it for fear of the consequences of breaking her agreements.

Tanya gave investigators her version of the story last February, two months before the Connolly trial. She said she'd met this man while riding the trolley in Chula Vista. She did not mention Planet Hollywood, but said he was a "chef at a restaurant." He gave Tanya and her girlfriend drugs ("kicked 'um down") and they became friends.

They eventually had an affair, but Tanya said she didn't know he was married until the pager incident. She denied any unprotected sex or lying to Prindle about forced oral copulation.

Tanya said her tenure with the Prindles ended after Sommer's estranged husband began making sexual advances towards her. Tanya told investigators that she informed Sommer about this and Lynn Prindle ("tweaking" at the time) began yelling that Tanya was trying to ruin Sommer's marriage.

Sommer said last week she did not know Tanya had been using drugs that summer, and it was the girl who had made advances, not her ex-husband.

"It was the opposite; she was coming on to him," Sommer said. "She would try to sit on his lap when he was over and my mother didn't think it was right."

Sommer said when Tanya finally tried to hit her, she felt the girl was out of control. She notified authorities in September that she could no longer care for her.

Continued on Page 4

Upcoming Events

Blood drive set for Sunday at Saint John's

There will be a blood drive at Saint John of the Cross Catholic Church from 8 a.m. - noon on Sunday in the east parking lot, 8086 Broadway.

The blood drive is sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, who will provide a free breakfast to those who give blood. All donors will receive a San Diego Blood Bank t-shirt and free cholesterol screening.

Those planning to donate should eat beforehand, should bring a picture identification and a donor I.D. card if available. Appointments may be made with Richard Hessling at 463-2183. For further information call 800-479-3902.

College offering class on animal behavior

A class for dog owners whose animals have behavior problems will be offered at Grossmont College through the Community Learning Program. "Solving Your Dog's Behavioral Problems" is set for noon- 3 p.m. on Feb. 28 and again on April 18 at Grossmont College, Room 551A, Grossmont College Drive in El Cajon. The cost is $29.

The class will deal with specific problems dog owners are having and teaching them a practical behavior modification program to change the dog's behavior. The solutions are geared toward the specific dogs and their specific families.

Instructor, Carole Schatz, is a graduate of Northwestern University and has an educator since 1968. She has been professionally involved with dog training since 1975. Schatz taught classes for the Obedience Club of San Diego County and the All-Breed Obedience Club.

For further information or to register, call 660-4350.

Museum chapter to present talk on Medicis

The East County Chapter of the San Diego Museum of Art will host "What's Cooking with the Medicis," a presentation by Holly Witchey, Manager of New Media Initiatives for the San Diego Museum of Art. The event will take place at 7 p.m. on Sunday at a private home in La Mesa.

Witchey's presentation will bring to life the famous Renaissance family's eating and drinking habits during the time of their dominance over Florence.

The presentation will benefit the museum's art program, which since 1991 has drawn well over 1,000 children representing different schools. The classes include drawing, paintings, sculpture animated cartooning and installation.

Guests and friends are welcome. Call 466-2601 for information.

Lemon Grove Fire Log

Jan. 30, 1998

3700 blk. Fairway Dr. Residential structure fire.
Lemon Grove Ave./Massachusetts Ave. Vehicle burglary.
7300 blk. Broadway Ave. Traffic accident.
Jamacha Rd./Jaeger Rd. Rescue.
3700 blk. Jill Ln. Back injury.
6400 blk. Mac Arthur Dr. Traffic accident.
7900 blk. Palm St. Attempted suicide.
3400 blk. Washington St. Seizure.
6800 blk. Cedral Pl. Gunshot/shooting victim.

Jan. 31, 1998

2800 blk. Massachusetts Ave. Seizure.
Kempf St./Golden Ave. Vehicle burglary.
7000 blk. Broadway Ave. Medical aid.

Feb. 1, 1998

9000 blk. Valencia St. Traffic accident.
Blossom Ln./Washington St. Traffic accident.
7900 blk. Longdale St. Residential structure fire.
2000 blk. Berryland Ct. Chest pains.

Feb. 2, 1998

7900 blk. Longdale St. Residential structure fire.
7100 blk. Broadway Ave. Child locked in auto.
1800 blk. Costada Ct. High fever.
6700 blk. Central Ave. Medical aid.

Feb. 3, 1998

2800 blk. Massachusetts Ave. Seizure.
WB Hwy 94/Spring St. Vehicle accident freeway.
San Miguel Ave./Massachusetts Ave. Traffic accident.
NB Hwy 125/Spring St. Vehicle accident freeway.
7100 blk. Rosemary Ln. Assist invalid.
1900 blk. Ensenada St. Fall.
3300 blk. Buena Vista Ave. Possible heart.

Feb. 4, 1998

3200 blk. Main St. Evaluate for the Sheriff.
1600 blk. 69th St. Vehicle accident.
1500 blk. Taft St. Fall.
2000 blk. Skyline Dr. Unconscious.
Mercury Dr./San Miguel Ave. Large vehicle fire.
7000 blk. Broadway Ave. Single-engine response.
7100 blk. Broadway Ave. Assault victim.
7500 blk. Pacific Ave. Medical aid.
3500 blk. Citrus St. Overdose.
7900 blk. Lemon Grove Way. Traffic accident.

Feb. 5, 1998

2200 blk. Massachusetts Ave. Chest pains.
7100 blk. West View Pl. Medical aid.
8800 blk. Lamar St. Ringing alarms commercial.
Broadway Ave./Lemon Grove Ave. Auto vs. pedestrian.
2800 blk. Massachusetts Ave. Vehicle accident.
7600 blk. Circle Dr. Possible stroke.

WEATHER

The following information was provided by the National Weather Service.

		High	Low
Feb.	2	69	49
Feb.	3	64	48
Feb.	4	64	48
Feb.	5	66	43
Feb.	6	61	48
Feb.	7	-	-
Feb.	8	-	-

Precipitation

Feb. 6 0.32"

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For advertising rates
Call Dan at 461-4306

B Words

by Bob Burns

Seniors to hold second 'Real Men Cook'

I am not sure that real men eat quiche, but I do know that many of them cook. It was well proven back some time ago when the Lemon Grove Senior Center put on a fundraiser that was called just that, "Real Men Cook." It was such a success that it is to be repeated again in March.

All of those who attended the first one will know what we are talking about, but this is for those who were not present at that scrumptious culinary affair.

What happens is that a select few "real men" of the community, prepare a goodly portion of their favorite dish to take to the Senior Center. Arranged on tables, they dish out samples of their toothsome masterpieces to the patrons in attendance. One is at liberty to circulate about the room and taste test the secret recipes of someone that many well know. It will probably be from the context of a totally different occupation (professional chefs, not allowed.) And it may well be of a surprise to learn of their prowess with a pot, skill with a skillet, or even tricks with a mix of exotic ingredients.

Last time we had some excellent servings. A Firehouse casserole was a real barn burner. There was a Tempura fish that was fit for an Emperor. We had a Spaghetti that tasted Italian but was served up by a guy with an English accent, and there were Irish Tacos, a Potato dish that was very tasty, and a special salad by a Pac Bell Lineman. Desserts were not excluded, and it is surprising how big men can have the most delicate tastebuds.

I am writing this to publicize the event, and also to invite real men to participate. I know that there are some out there who can contribute to this event and have a ball doing it. Some dish that can be apportioned out in small amounts, for about 50 to 75 people. Something different, or a new variation on an old preparation. If it is wished to keep the recipe a secret, you may do so, and drive them wild trying to figure it out. Or, the recipe can be duplicated and provided for those who might like it.

Whatever, it is loads of fun, and a culinary gormet event. Last time, I did suspect that some of the wives may have had a hand in the "real men" presentations, and we did not hold that to be bad. In fact, it probably was a Godsend in a few of the instances.

Information as to the time and date will be forthcoming, and anyone who wishes to participate is welcomed and can let them know at the Senior Center. The Senior Center is working very hard to sustain itself and needs our help. Help can, sometimes be a great joy to give, and this is one of the best. Whichever side of the table you wish to be on, this is an event you will not want to miss ... (come to my table for a real treat ...)

Upcoming Events

Healthy cooking class offered by physicians group

Healthy Personal Physicians continues its healthy cooking classes with the heart healthy "Mediterranean Diet." The public is invited to attend the class conducted by Chef Gregory Anne Cox from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday.

Chef Gregory will demonstrate easy methods of low-fat cooking using fresh pressed extra virgin olive oil, fruity balsamic vinegar, fish, beans, pasta and tomatoes. The entree will be a vegetable lasagna served with an Italian green salad and shaved Parmesan cheese.

Headed by Neil Hirschenbein, M.D., Personal Physicians provides patients with comprehensive wellness programs that include complete medical care, guest lectures and personal fitness training.

Registration for the February cooking class is $10 per person and reservations are encouraged, as seating is limited. Personal Physicians is located at 1685 E. Main St., Suite 301, El Cajon. For reservations or more information, call 579-8681.

Libraries seek volunteer internet instructors

The San Diego County libraries are looking for Internet volunteers to assist children and adults in learning how to use the Internet. The El Cajon Branch Library will hold a training and orientation class from 9 - 11 a.m. on Saturday at the library, 201 E. Douglas Ave. For more information, contact Brenna Ring at 579-4454.

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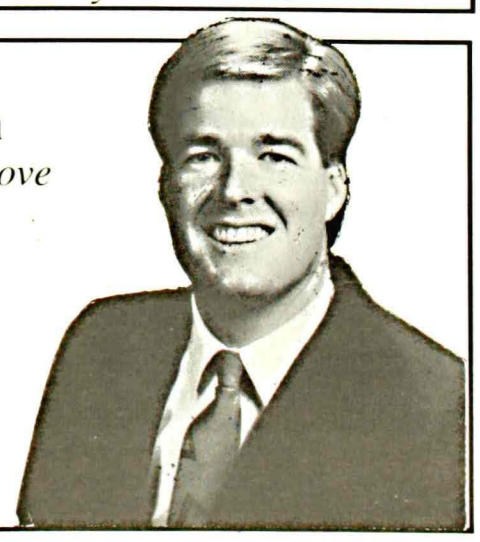


Commentary

Condemned often talk of salvation

by Greg Eichelberger

Now that the coffin lid has closed on the Karla Faye Tucker Brown case once and for all and the woman who pick-axed two people to death 17 years ago has gone to meet her Maker, the whole media frenzy surrounding the case has to be analyzed.

So much was made of her death row religious conversion that it almost obscured her original crime. It also made me think of another case I once read about while studying historical aspects of criminal justice. It's not so much that Brown was a woman. No, I'm talking about good old time religion and how it can play right into someone's diabolical hands.

In June of 1914, a blonde-haired young man got off a train in Wheaton, Ill. His name was Henry Spencer and his background and origins were mysterious.

Nevertheless, he was an affable sort who soon ingratiated himself with the town's leading citizens. He was well-groomed, had money in his pocket and told everyone he was a salesman. He met and wooed a spinster by the name of Allison Rexroat, who was ten years his senior and possessed an ample bank account. Spencer seduced her with the promise of marriage, and, after convincing her to put her life savings in his name, took her to an isolated spot outside Wheaton, ostensively to a private picnic.

Needless to say, Miss Rexroat never returned from that excursion, her brains bashed out with a hammer, she was buried in a shallow grave while her killer withdrew the funds from the bank and waited for the 1 p.m. flyer to whisk him from the dull little town. Before he was able to board the train, however, the local sheriff and a banker collared him. The banker, an old friend of the victim, had grown suspicious when he saw Spencer withdraw the money and reported him to the constabulary.

After a week of grilling, a deputy lost his tempter and slapped Spencer in the mouth. The sight of his own blood caused the shaken killer to reveal the whereabouts of Rexroat, as well as the murder weapon. He was tried and quickly convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to the gallows. It was at this time that two hard-boiled newspapermen, Wallace Smith and Ben Hecht of the Chicago Daily News, arrived for an interview. They found Spencer in his cell with two evangelists.

Claiming a "complete spiritual rebirth," the condemned man told the cynical reporters," Yes, I killed her. I have no secrets from God. He knows me. I have repented. My soul is washed of all wickedness. God can look into it and see that there is nothing evil left. That's why he will let me into Heaven."

Smith and Hecht debated over his so-called conversion. Hecht thought he was sincere and believed his repentance. Smith, on the other hand, was heard to say, "He's a fraud. It's holier-than-thou gibberish. He's as sly and as rotten as ever. There's no faith or repentance involved. Henry's a rat and he'll die like a rat."

In August, the day finally came for Spencer to face the music. He practically bounded up the steps of the gallows and gave a flowery speech on how the Lord was waiting to greet him. "I can see my new home," he intoned. "The streets are golden and the houses are pure and white." But just when the noose was fitted around his neck, and it appeared as if Smith would lose the bet, Spencer's demeanor suddenly changed. Desperately, he began, "What I got to say is I'm innocent of the murder of Allison Rexroat. I never killed her. It's a lie! You got no right!'

The sheriff then waved to the hangman and Spencer's last words were cut of as he was sent to his own mortality. Smith then turned to Hecht and said, "See, I told you, like a rat."

Now Mrs. Brown, who married a prison minister, convinced many that she has changed, duped the media into presenting her as a Christian who could do more good alive than strapped on a gurney.

Remember in early 1989, when Ted Bundy said he had been born again and denounced pornography, on the eve of his electrocution?

In fact, very few condemned prisoners do *not* have some sort of religious "revelation."

I believe that God is merciful, yet requires us to answer for our own actions. It seems hard to imagine that these killers would receive the same reward as those who led quiet, uneventful lives of service and never hurt anyone. But I suppose when you're looking into the precipice, you'll say *anything* that will comfort you, even if it's a complete and total distortion of the scriptures and the truth.

PG Perspectives

by Phillip Giannangeli

Everything's falling

The markets in Asia are falling. There are reports that trousers in the White House followed a similar course. Joining this downward spiral, my arches. I think they are heading South too. The state of the world this February day is wobbly at best.

I don't know enough about economics to understand all the ramifications of the Asian collapse. I've heard that it could make the price of certain cars cheaper in the U.S. although the market for those cars might be reduced by layoffs to U.S. workers. That would happen because foreign consumers wouldn't be able to buy products made by U.S. workers because their falling currencies aren't worth what they used to be. This would further accelerate the decline of the currencies in those countries, making their products even cheaper for U.S. workers who wouldn't, however, be able to buy them because they have no jobs or paychecks. Which would mean those countries would make fewer cars to send over here and lay off more of the workers who make those cars. This would lead to ... Phew. See why many economists have this sort of dazed look about them?

If you understand how any of this economic stuff works, you have an obligation to explain it to the rest of us. You could begin by telling us what pork bellies have to do with anything. And if you could explain what the Fed actually does, you should be in line for a Nobel Prize.

The sex in the White House story has gotten way too much play as far as I'm concerned. I'm going to dispose of it here quickly. Who did what to whom, when and where, at whose instigation and on what piece of furniture may never be fully known. It sure has been curious, though, to watch the press corps throughout this matter. Haven't seen such salacious smiles on the faces of Sam Donaldson and company since Joey and Amy were front page stuff and the media was decrying sex with minors while providing all the lurid details. There's seems to be a whole group, in the press corps and the general public as well, who will rush to judgment on high moral principle, but want every low down juicy detail too.

As for my falling arches, I'm not sure what course of action to take or how I should view their possible collapse. I talked to a couple of economists and they advised me to sell short and invest in futures, whatever that means. I don't see how selling my shorts has anything to do with my arches, but as I said, I've never been too good in the field of economics. My political friends advise me to deny everything including any reports that I even have arches. They warn me to be careful about what I do and say. A close friend told me to see this development for what it actually is: a plot by right wing podiatrists intent on my destruction. Yikes.

If by some quirk of fate, a small fowl (aka Chicken Little) suddenly appears and starts telling me that the sky too is falling, I think I'll just pack it in. Isn't anything going up this February?

Reel Thoughts

'Oscar and Lucinda' gamble with love

by Betty Jo Tucker

One of the strangest love stories ever filmed arrived just in time for Valentine's Day. "Oscar and Lucinda," a sweeping period drama, is set in Australia during the Victorian Era. It tells the tale of two misfits, both consumed with a passion for gambling, who grow to care deeply about each other.

The free-spirited Lucinda (Cate Blanchett) first meets Oscar (Ralph Fiennes), an uptight Anglican minister, when she asks him to hear her confession. Worried about her addiction to wagering, Lucinda hopes confessing will help cure this habit. Since Oscar is also a gambler, what starts out as a religious experience ends in a game of cards. Thus begins an unusual relationship that, while continuously revolving around gambling, develops into one of mutual devotion.

However, both Oscar and Lucinda are unwilling to risk declaring their true feelings. Misunderstandings, missed opportunities, and a final dangerous bet work to keep them apart. Hoping to convince Lucinda of his love, Oscar wagers that he can transport a glass church over treacherous territory and deliver it to another minister he believes she loves. This reckless decision causes misadventures never dreamed of by our unconventional hero.

Cate Blanchett as (Lucinda) and Ralph Fiennes as (Oscar) share an intimate moment in Gillian Armstrong's "Oscar and Lucinda."

Nominated for an Academy Award for "The English Patient" and "Schlinder's List," Fiennes plays Oscar with a shy fragility that may surprise his fans and win over his critics.

In contrast, newcomer Blanchett gives Lucinda a devil-may-care manner that perfectly complements her co-star's more subdued performance. These two fine actors share some wonderfully tender moments on screen, and we are drawn into their enchanting scenes together by the special chemistry between them.

Regrettably, the rest of the movie fails to maintain this emotional intensity. After a promising opening, the film's last half meanders so that we think it will never end. Based on Peter Carey's sprawling novel and directed by Gillian Armstrong of "Little Women" fame, "Oscar and Lucinda" leaves us awed by its beautiful scenery and costumes, but disappointed with its convoluted presentation. Yet, one could do worse than spend Valentine's Day with two romantically challenged characters who show us how important it is to follow our hearts. (Warning: Don't expect a traditional happy ending from this very different Fox Searchlight movie.)

Letter to the Editor

Grossmont audits were desperately needed

Even through the smoke and mirrors created by the Grossmont Teacher's Union High School District's former board majority, the public can see that the financial audits were desperately needed.

What bothers me is that the teacher's union and their old board continually acted as if nothing was wrong and that they fought the audits so hard.

Today we know that, the books were kept in pencil even though the district had the highest expenditure for technology in San Diego County (including San Diego Unified), the records of expenditures on the Steele Canyon site have been destroyed, the records of expenditures on the automated library system have been destroyed, the district is $32 million in debt, half a million dollars was wasted because the district didn't solicit bids for computers and the budget director, Fred Martinez, disappeared when the auditors began asking questions!

What we don't know is:

1. Why did the former board majority and the teacher's union oppose the audits?
2. Why did board member Harrelson insist on having his attorney present if forced to meet with auditors?
3. Why did Fred Martinez hire an attorney?
4. Why did Fred Martinez disappear?
5. Did members of the former board majority benefit from Fred's penciled record keeping system?
6. Why do we have a $32 million debt?
7. Why did the former board majority fail their fiduciary responsibility to monitor budgetary practices and expenditures?
8. Why hasn't anyone been fired for poor performance?
9. Is Fred Martinez receiving a taxpayer-funded pension when he wouldn't even show up to answer our questions about our money?
10. How many more records have been destroyed or altered and are these practices limited to financial records only or do they extend to pupil records?
11. Where is Fred Martinez?
12. Is anyone looking for him?

Maybe the taxpayers should file a suit to compel board members Harrelson, Mott and Reep and employee Fred Martinez to pay our kids back!

DAVID KIDDER
El Cajon

Connolly's Last Valentine

Continued from Page 1

The next month, Tanya was picked up in National City for breaking curfew. She lied to police about her name and age, leading to a second charge of providing false information to a peace officer. She was loose ("AWOL") from the Polinsky Children's Center and told police her last foster mother was Lynn Prindle. Prindle told the police Tanya had a history of prostitution and had moved out to live with a 23-year-old "pimp," whom Tanya described as her "boyfriend."

"She is no longer my responsibility," Prindle told the cops.

The He Said/ She Said Trial

Tanya went to Juvenile Hall after her arrest in National City on Oct. 24, 1995. The court randomly assigned Public Defender Tom Connolly to represent the girl. At their first sit-down interview in the Hall, Tanya told Connolly he was familiar and that she had "had a date" with him.

Connolly denied any sexual encounter, but requested himself replaced to avoid any conflict of interest. He said the girl was familiar as well: only when he met her a scant three weeks earlier, she had a black eye, appeared somewhat older and claimed to have a 2-year-old baby.

Connolly and Tanya agreed that on Oct. 7, they met near Keith's Restaurant on the northern border of National City. They also agreed she told him she had a child and needed a place to stay the night. He rented her a room at the Nite Lite Inn just a couple of blocks away, a fact further substantiated by a registration record for Room 127 in Connolly's name.

Aside from these details, the two accounts bear little resemblance, like two parallel movies running simultaneously, featuring the same cast of characters but with different plots and endings.

To further complicate matters, the version Tanya told the jury in April of last year had significant variations from versions told to authorities six months after the events.

Prosecutor Lora Fox Martin, as well as the 12 jurors, believed Tanya's version and attributed any inconsistencies to childish confusion.

Tanya testified that Connolly was cruising Roosevelt Avenue and pulled over to solicit her. He stopped at an ATM to get money and to buy a condom. They drove to a nearby motel but discovered there were no vacancies. They went to a second motel.

At this second motel, Tanya said she massaged Connolly with lotion and gave him a "blow job." As they were leaving to go get Tanya's belongings at the Big 7 Motel in Chula Vista, a black couple who seemed to recognize Tanya asked to use the bathroom.

The motel manager noticed all the traffic and requested that the whole group leave the premises. Connolly got in an argument with the lady and demanded a refund. Tanya concluded her story with Connolly dropping her off at the Big 7 and giving her cab fare to return to the Nite Lite with her belongings and boyfriend.

In Connolly's version, the black couple flagged him down as he exited Keith's Restaurant. He had driven to National City to find the Star News, which he had been told featured an editorial by his electoral nemesis, Assemblyman Steve Baldwin. Connolly said the black man, in his early 20s, asked for help and motioned to Tanya, distraught with a black eye.

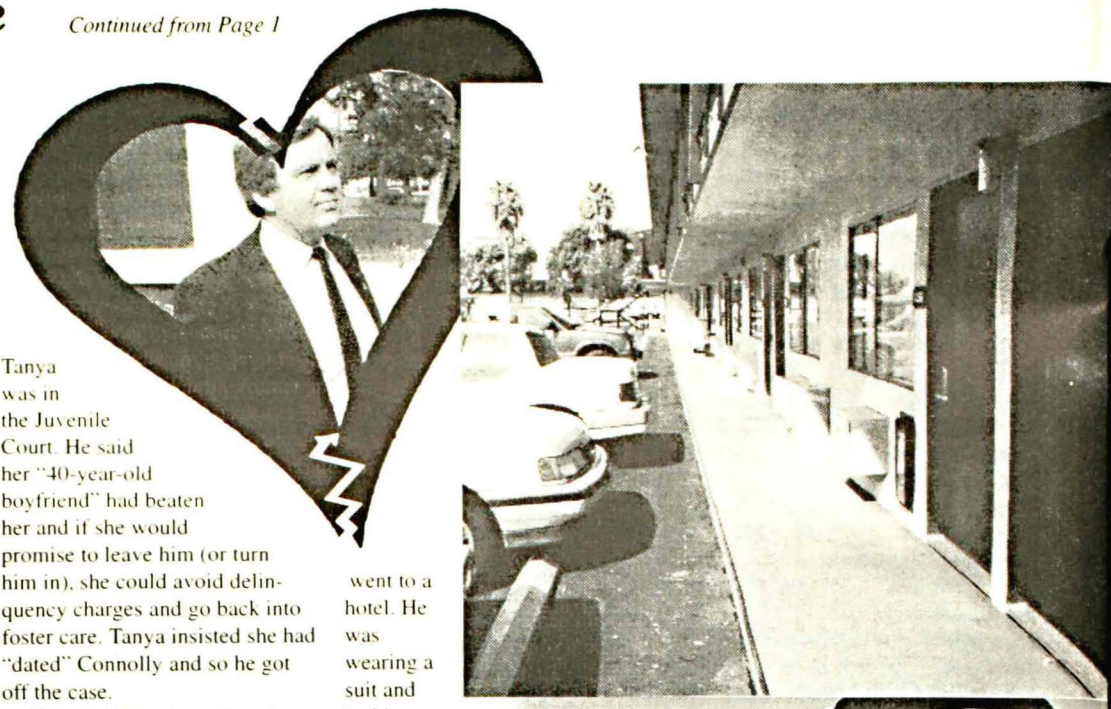
Insisting she not be taken to a battered women's shelter, Tanya asked him to drive her to a motel down the road. She said she had family from Arizona coming to pick her up. She ran in and soon returned, stating she couldn't stay there but now had money. She asked to be driven back to her friends at Keith's, but the black couple was gone by the time they returned.

They turned up, however, down the block at the National City Motel. Connolly said Tanya insisted he rent her a room because she did not have the required ID. He used her money to rent the room and left the girl in the care of the couple.

Before he could leave, Connolly said Tanya wanted to check if the TV was working. She indicated that the last time she stayed at this motel, it did not. The TV wasn't working and Connolly called the manager (in this version, a man), who became upset with four people using the room and ordered them all to leave.

Connolly demanded a refund and drove around the block to the Nite Lite (now called the Colony Inn). He rented a second room for the girl and promptly left. He gave her his business card with his home phone number written on the back, inviting the girl to call him or his wife if her family didn't arrive to assist her.

The next time Connolly saw Tanya was in the Juvenile Court. He said her "40-year-old boyfriend" had beaten her and if she would promise to leave him (or turn him in), she could avoid delinquency charges and go back into foster care. Tanya insisted she had "dated" Connolly and so he got off the case.



Connolly didn't argue that he rented Tanya Room 127 at the Nite Lite Inn. They just disagreed about what she had to do for it.

Tanya told her long-time dependency attorney, Edlene McKenzie, about Connolly during her first few days in Juvenile Hall. McKenzie testified that she lectured Tanya about dangers of "taking money from various men and using that money to buy rooms and food." Tanya told her not all the men you meet on the street are bad: she was involved with her delinquency attorney, Tom Connolly.

McKenzie said she was very concerned about Tanya's claims and immediately called Connolly to suggest he get off the case. Tanya insisted that McKenzie not make any public charges.

Some 3 1/2 months later, for reasons that even Tanya couldn't quite articulate, she asked McKenzie to pursue charges against Connolly. McKenzie contacted the Public Defender's office and the National City Police. One thing Tanya told McKenzie, Sommer Prindle, police and prosecutors — everyone, it seems, but the jury — was that she had seen Connolly two or three times. On the witness stand, she insisted they had only one encounter.

On March 7, 1996, Tanya told Public Defender investigator Karen Cabrera that she saw Connolly "two or three times." He picked her up on the street and went to a hotel. He was wearing a suit and had just gotten off work. There were no vacancies, so they went to a second hotel. Connolly got in a fight with the Chinese manager and got a refund. He then drove her to the Big 7 and gave her cab fare to return to the place where they had been kicked out.

"Minor denied any sexual act during this first encounter and was adamant they only talked," Cabrera wrote in her report. "I tried to clarify why she would be going back to the same hotel they were kicked out of and refunded for, when Ms. McKenzie intervened."

Cabrera stated Tanya said she met Connolly and had oral sex at a second time in a "really old hotel" in National City. Attempts to straighten the crooked tale were blocked by McKenzie.

About two weeks later, National City Police Detective Dennis Leach interviewed Tanya at the New Alternatives Center, a residential facility for severely emotionally disturbed children in Chula Vista. She said she saw Connolly once and he paid her for oral sex. Two weeks after that, she told Leach she saw Connolly twice, but reversed the order given Cabrera. She said the first time she gave him oral sex and the second time "we just talked."

Despite these wrinkles, the attorney general's office believed they had a solid case. Leach turned up the room registration at the Nite Lite Inn although no one at the National City Motel, including manager Yen Swan Chi, could remember an argument resulting in a refund or recognized Connolly's photograph.

The Public Defender's office could find no record of a phone message for Connolly left by Tanya, who told Cabrera she arranged the "second date" by phone.

Prosecutors subpoenaed Connolly's bank records, but could find no record of an ATM withdrawal on Oct. 7. Two witnesses testified — although they clashed on exact times — that Connolly had spent that day, a Saturday, at

The cost of imprisonment

The California Department of Corrections' (CDC) current budget stands at $3.8 billion. The CDC estimates that it costs $21,376 to house a prisoner in a state prison.

The American Bar Association believes that the cost is much higher — more than $30,000 when construction costs and debt service are amortized.

Before being placed in a permanent assignment, prisoners are evaluated and classified at a reception center. Cost per inmate: $142.

Correction officers are among the best paid state personnel. Cost per inmate: $10,638.

Medical and mental health programs cost $3,172 per inmate.

Maintaining the facility, its records, and providing necessary food and clothing costs $6,224 per inmate.

Prison labor maintains the system — including janitorial, clerical and other basic jobs. There are also basic educational classes and 65 vocational programs that can lead to work in the prison industry authority. Cost per inmate: $1,200.

Source: Prison Law Office

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2# BOLOGNA
2# SALAMI
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25# GROUND BEEF
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5# BBQ STEAK
20# END CUT PORK CHOPS
5# FRANKS
10# SAUSAGE
4# BOLOGNA
3# SALAMI
5# BACON
10# BEEF RIBS

a veteran's event dressed in jogging clothes, not a business suit.

The "black couple," perhaps the closest thing to any witnesses, were never identified or located by police. Tanya's 23-year-old boyfriend, Ethan Graham, was also never interviewed or subpoenaed despite the fact that at the height of the attorney general's investigation, he was arrested for brawling and possessing marijuana.

Sommer Prindle, who said Tanya confided in her that she dated Connolly a few times and that "he gave her lots of money," was never put on the stand. The prosecution wasn't interested in damaging Tanya's credibility and Connolly's defense attorney, Herb Weston, didn't want support for Tanya's claims of sex with Connolly.

Both Connolly and Tanya testified they encountered a black couple at the National City Motel. The couple could have verified one of the stories, but they were never located.

"It was a tactical decision," Weston said last week. "Sommer Prindle had good things to say and bad things to say. She gave good information about Tanya's lack of credibility, but I didn't need another person saying Tanya admitted having a sexual relationship with Tom."

The Aftermath

Jon Pettis will be the first to tell you an appeal has nothing to do with re-evaluating testimony or interviewing witnesses the jury didn't hear. It is asking three judges to evaluate the trial documents to see if there was an error of law.

"I have to find a mistake in law that had an impact on the outcome of the trial," said Pettis, son of Rev. Ed Pettis and brother of former Connolly legislative aid, Mark. "The admission of the testimony of Michelle Roman as to alleged acts Tom committed in the 1980s was that mistake."

Pettis said that without hard evidence or witnesses, the prosecution needed to stack the jury's emotional deck against Connolly by bringing up his past. By implying that Connolly had once hired a prostitute to dress up like a girl, the jury could extrapolate that he would have later hired a real 14-year-old.

Tanya will be 17 in May. Records regarding arrests or foster home placement are not public. Sommer Prindle hasn't talked to her for a while. She said she changed her telephone number after Tanya called repeatedly for money and giving the Prindle the impression she was involved with a pimp.

Tanya's grandmother declined to comment, but indicated Tanya might be in Arizona with her mother.

Tom Connolly is easy to find. After a brief stint in the downtown jail, he was moved to Donovan State Prison in Otay Mesa where his probation officer recommended he serve in a work furlough program, in which he would be allowed to work during the day and return to the prison at night.

Instead, Connolly was transferred to the California Men's Colony, 180 miles northwest of Los Angeles in San Luis Obispo. The Colony has two facilities side by side, the western prison for minimum-security prisoners like Connolly and the eastern one for medium-risk inmates. It is a popular place for high-profile convicts, and has housed Christian Brando, Timothy Leary, Craig Peyer and Tex Watson.

The Colony is about 2,500 men over capacity, with more than 1,500 staff members. Connolly lives with 11 other inmates in Dormitory 22, the upper berth of Bed 7.

Visitors typically feel like prisoners as well. There are stringent rules regarding personal conduct, and the most innocent deviation is greeted with demeaning scorn. Anyone dressed in blue (like the guards) or black (like the gangs) or drab olive (like the inmates) will be turned away. No belt buckles, earrings, hairpins or even underwire bras are allowed inside.

Visitors stand in a line that runs outside the entrance into the parking lot. It takes about an hour and a half to get inside to the reception area, a huge Quonset hut with three rows of chairs and vending machines along the back wall.

Connolly isn't easy to recognize at first. Prison officials advised him to alter his appearance in case any disgruntled clients from his public defender's tenure decide he's to blame for their fate. He's lost weight, has hair three inches below his collar and sports a full mustache and beard.

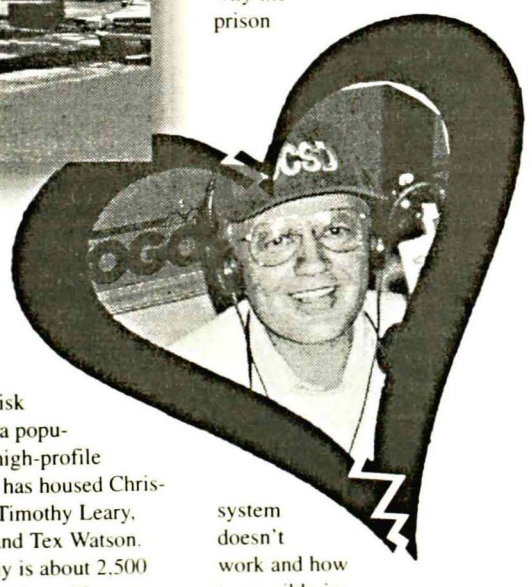
He resembles a street man, albeit well-groomed, in a drab olive uniform not unlike hospital scrubs.

Connolly's morale seems all right. He is upset about his dog, Liberty. He left the former stray with a friend in Lakeside, but Liberty kept escaping under the fence. The last time, she could not be found. The day before frantic friends visited the animal shelter near Spring Valley, the staff had put Liberty to sleep.

Connolly says he misses his ex-wife, Janet, who asked for legal separation about two months after Tanya decided to press charges. Connolly doesn't get orange juice in prison and greedily drinks down the two containers brought by visitors from Santee, the only ones who have journeyed to the Colony to visit him.

He's working in the prison library, checking in inmates and checking out books. He introduces his visitors to another inmate, an attorney who's been "inside" for 11 years. Connolly whispers there's an unwritten rule against asking anyone why they're in prison.

He says he's reading a lot of American literature these days, and his friends pledge to send him some Steinbeck and Hemingway. Inmates can receive books if they are shipped directly from bookstores. He's also keeping a daily journal, including observations of why the prison system doesn't work and how to possibly improve it.

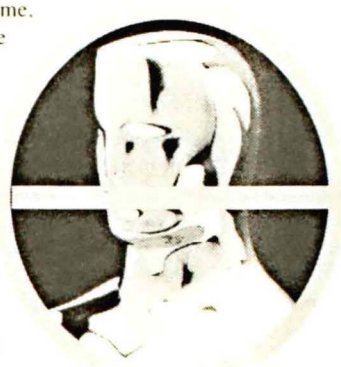


He hopes to be released late this summer. If his appeal fails, he will not be able to practice law when he's out. He still hopes to exonerate himself. Like some kind of latter-day Valentine, he doesn't think people should go to prison for helping someone who's down and out, even if the rest of the world doesn't believe people really help without exacting a price.

Prison isn't fun, but Connolly's serving his time with resignation and finding a strange, mental freedom.

"I was a slave to the pager, telephone and fax machine," he says. "Now I can read and think. To some degree I have a greater amount of freedom to feed my mind."

Move over, Oscar, it's Eastie time!



Every year about this time, big media pats itself on the back with another series of award shows. Meanwhile, talent goes unnoticed right here at home.

In a small attempt to remedy this state of affairs, Forum Publications is preparing to bestow the first-ever "Eastie Awards," honoring excellence in local theater.

No less than three community theater groups produced some 13 shows in 1997, from the Lamplighters' "Blithe Spirit" to Christian Community Theater's "Traditions of Christmas." Octad-One Productions produced drama, comedy and a children's musical. This doesn't even touch high school and college productions.

These shows were reviewed by our various writers, who have been asked to scan the 1997 season for stand-outs. We offer those nominations below. However, we need the theater-watching public to make the final judgement.

We invite readers to vote for your favorite actors and actresses and return the ballot to our office by March 2. The winners will be announced around the time that Oscar guy tries to crash the scene.

The Easties, at this point, will be honorable mentions in the pages of this newspaper. (If anyone at a local trophy or graphic shop is interested in designing or donating actual awards, don't hesitate to contact us at 469-0101.)

Easties Ballot

Please mail to: Box 127, Lemon Grove, CA 91946
Your name will be entered into a drawing for tickets to local productions.

Best Actor (Drama)
- ❑ Jeffrey Jones — "Night Must Fall" (Octad)
- ❑ Danny Campbell — "Dancing At Lugnasa" (Octad)
- ❑ Lloyd Frazier —"Driving Miss Daisy" (Lamplighters)
- ❑ David Gallagher-Lydecker — "Laura" (Lamplighters)

Best Actress (Drama)
- ❑ Jill Virginia Costanzo — "Night Must Fall" (Octad)
- ❑ Pat Hansen — "Driving Miss Daisy" (Lamplighters)
- ❑ Ginger Radenheimer — "Night Must Fall" (Octad)

Best Actor (Comedy)
- ❑ Jeffrey Jones — "Picnic" (Octad)
- ❑ Joseph Zilvinskis — "My Three Angels" (Octad)
- ❑ Andy Boutelle — "Father Of The Bride" (Lamplighters)

Best Actress (Comedy)
- ❑ Gail Freeborn — "My Three Angels" (Octad)
- ❑ Layla Stuckey — "Father Of The Bride" (Lamplighters)
- ❑ Nancy Errickson — "Father Of The Bride" (Lamplighters)

Best Supporting Actor (Comedy)
- ❑ Marty Hresa — "My Three Angels" (Octad)
- ❑ Jack Winan — "My Three Angels" (Octad)
- ❑ Max Macke — "Father Of The Bride" (Lamplighters)
- ❑ Greg Muskowitz — "Father Of The Bride" (Lamplighters)
- ❑ Danny Campbell — "Much Ado About Nothing" (Octad)

Best Supporting Actress (Comedy)
- ❑ Teresa Henning — "My Three Angels" (Octad)
- ❑ Robin Roarke — "Father Of The Bride" (Lamplighters)
- ❑ Nancy Errickson — "Father of the Bride" (Lamplighters)
- ❑ Layla Stuckey — "Father of the Bride" (Lamplighters)

Best Actor (Musical)
- ❑ Jason Kent — "Godspell" (CCT)
- ❑ Paul Russell — "South Pacific" (CCT)
- ❑ William Nolan — "South Pacific" (CCT)
- ❑ Donal Pugh — "Annie" (CCT)
- ❑ David Schwartzentraub — "Annie" (CCT)
- ❑ Justin Parks — "Godspell" (CCT)
- ❑ Ken Rose — "Traditions Of Christmas" (CCT)

Best Actress (Musical)
- ❑ Amy Cook — "42nd Street" (CCT)
- ❑ Amy Cook — "South Pacific" (CCT)
- ❑ Stephanie Hargrove — "South Pacific" (CCT)
- ❑ Whitney Pappas — "Annie" (CCT)
- ❑ Louise Smith — "Annie" (CCT)

Board of Supervisors consider proposals for library funding

by Joe Naiman

The county Board of Supervisors is looking at having city governments pay more to keep library doors open. At its Feb. 3 meeting, the board voted to investigate a series of proposals which could provide long-term stability for library funding at the possible expense of the cities.

The County Library System, which consists of 31 branches, two bookmobiles, and an adult literacy center, serves the unincorporated areas of San Diego County as well as 11 of the county's 18 incorporated cities. The library system currently derives 75 percent of its budget from a dedicated share of property tax revenues while dipping into the general fund for the additional 25 percent.

The county has set five strategic goals for its long-term library plans: stable and permanent funding, increased hours, staff compensation, a management reserve and compliance of all branches with the Americans with Disabilities Act. These goals will require an estimated $8.5 million above the library's current annual budget.

Three potential proposals were put to the county Board of Supervisors at the Feb. 3 meeting. The first would involve operating contracts between libraries and the cities in the County Library System, bringing more of a balance between the budgets of those libraries and the amount of dedicated property tax from those cities. The second is a competitiveness study for possible privatization or other outsourcing, and the third is a property tax shift to change the dedicated funding from 0.43 percent of property tax revenues to 1.01 percent.

Although declining property tax revenues forced budget cuts both at the county and state level, resulting in a reduction of property tax money returned to the counties, increased revenues and anticipated growth are expected to keep the funding from adversely impacting public safety, parks or other county expenditures.

"I firmly believe the time has come and the time is right to move forward with a long-term stable funding source for our library system," said 2nd District Supervisor Dianne Jacob. "By making a small change in our county's property tax allocation, our library budget will double."

Because of the anticipated growth, Jacob's plan would require neither new taxes nor taking away funds from other services.

"The solution comes from the growth in property tax. A few years ago we couldn't have done this."

Because reallocating the county's property tax revenue will require permission from the state of California, Jacob's motion was to direct the county counsel and the county's chief administrative officer to seek urgency legislation to reallocate the funds, subject to county voter approval, to prepare a proposal to bring county library funding up to the statewide average over a three-year period, to bring back to the Board of Supervisors the necessary ballot language for a reallocation measure to be approved by the voters, and to work with the California Highway Patrol and the district attorney's office to ensure that law enforcement remains the top budget priority of the county.

Supervisor Pam Slater amended Jacob's motion to incorporate consideration of the first two proposals into the county's long-term stable library funding plans. Slater noted that incorporating all three potential solutions would negate much of the criticism of the county's library operation.

The first proposal, that of reducing subsidies for incorporated cities, pits those 11 cities against the unincorporated areas. The dedicated revenues from property tax account for only 26 percent of the budget for the Lemon Grove library, and of the four incorporated cities in East County only Santee is above the median of 53 percent. Santee's contribution of 57 percent is fifth among the cities in the County Library System while La Mesa's 47 percent ranks eighth, El Cajon's 35 percent ranks ninth, and Lemon Grove's share is the lowest of the incorporated cities.

Imperial Beach, with 34 percent, is tenth, and Supervisor Greg Cox was the Board's leading critic of the contracts-with-cities proposal. Cox noted that libraries are probably more important in cities like Imperial Beach which have little discretionary income than in more affluent communities.

Currently 10 of the 11 cities are receiving more money for their libraries than their property owners are paying through the dedicated share. Encinitas pays 101 percent of its budget through the 0.43 percent of property tax revenues, followed by Poway at 86 percent and San Marcos at 69 percent.

Supervisor Bill Horn, who called libraries a necessary function of county government, suggested that the county ought to match what the cities contribute.

Santee's Perry Shipman, a member of Santee's Friends of the Library organization, noted that Santee would be expanding its library to 30,000 square feet after issuing a request for proposals at its Jan. 28 City Council meeting.

"You have the professionals at this time, we will have the building," Shipman said.

Trudy Garrett of the Friends of the Fletcher Hills Library supported the third proposal, but is afraid that the first proposal would also open up funding discussion of other issues and take away from the library discussion. She expressed wariness about the outsourcing success of the Riverside library system, which has contracted to a private firm since July but had contracted to the city of Riverside prior to that.

Cox also expressed concern about the third proposal, suggesting that the county look at the 20-year projections rather than three-year projections before irrevocably committing a portion of its funding for the libraries.

Beth Santangelo, who lives in the unincorporated area of Mount Helix, remarked that propping up the libraries in a community would likely increase property values, thus providing the necessary revenue for other items.

"Libraries and schools are visible evidence of a community's prosperity," she said.

Santangelo also argued that the ability of children to go to libraries after school would reduce public safety expenditures and additional public access to health-related materials would reduce health-care costs while public access to environmental awareness would make people more cognizant of land-use issues and reduce those costs for the county.

"No dollar that you spend on libraries is every misspent," she said. "We know this is something the public approves."

Jacob noted that libraries are unique among the county's departments in that volunteers provide a significant amount of labor while donations complement government dollars. Jacob insisted that the CAO's analysis should ensure that whatever decision the county makes will not adversely impact volunteer input.

The proposal to go forth with further study passed by a 3-1 vote, with Cox opposing and Ron Roberts absent. Jacob noted not only that the proposal to investigate did not yet lock in the county to a decision, but also that additional suggestions from the public are encouraged.

"If they have a better idea for long-term stable funding for the libraries in this county, please step forward."

Worship Directory

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LEMON GROVE, CA 91945
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Mount Miguel High School at
1800 Sweetwater Road
Worship Service & Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Nursery & Child Care provided
Pastor Jim Reed 697-7770

LEMON GROVE LUTHERAN CHURCH
Loving God - Living Christ
Corner Skyline and Alton Drive
John R. Embree, Pastor
Telephone: 465-7301
Worship Services:
Traditional 9 a.m. Contemporary 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School 10:30 a.m.

Lemon Grove Christian Church
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Lemon Grove
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Uplifting Music • Sunday School • Nursery
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Worship: Sunday at 9:00 am & 10:40 am • Saturday at 6:00 pm
Church: **465-1888** • Preschool: **465-1887**

PUBLIC NOTICES

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
Assigned File No 98001615
The Name of the Business:
STARWORKS ENTERPRISES
located at: 1638 Cameron Drive in: Lemon Grove, CA 91945 is hereby registered by the following owner:
LUISA MARIA STAGNARO
1638 CAMERON DRIVE
LEMON GROVE, CA 91945
This business is conducted by: an Individual
The transaction of business began on: 01-02-97
Signature of Registrant:
THOMAS ENGLISH
This statement was filed with Gregory J. Smith the Recorder/ County Clerk of San Diego County on JAN 20 1998
Lemon Grove Review
Jan. 29, Feb. 5, 12 & 19, 1998

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Jan. 29, Feb. 5, 12 & 19, 1998

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
Assigned File No 98002325
The Name of the Business:
JUDIN VENTURES
located at: 3707 Fifth Ave., #155 in: San Diego, Ca 92103 is hereby registered by the following owner:
JUDI NEUBAUER
816-B SUTTER ST.
SAN DIEGO 92103
This business is conducted by: an Individual
The transaction of business began on: 1/27/98
Signature of Registrant:
JUDI NEUBAUER
This statement was filed with Gregory J. Smith the Recorder/ County Clerk of San Diego County on JAN 27 1998
Lemon Grove Review
Feb. 5, 12, 19 & 26, 1998

NOTICE TO BIDDERS
The Grossmont Union High School District will receive bids for purchase of
LEASE PURCHASE OF NINETEEN SCHOOL BUSES FOR TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
Each bid shall be submitted on a form obtained at the Purchasing Department of said District, located at 1100 Murray Drive, El Cajon, CA 92020-5664 (mailing address: P.O. Box 1043, La Mesa, CA 91944-1043), shall be sealed and filed in said Purchasing Department on or before 2:00 p.m. on
February 27, 1998
and will be publicly opened and read aloud at that time and place.
The contract will be awarded to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder meeting specifications. The Grossmont Union High School district reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to accept or reject any one or more items of a bid or to waive any irregularities or informalities in the bids or in the bidding.
No bidder may withdraw his bid for a period of thirty (30) days after the date set for the opening of bids.
In the event of identical bids, the Governing Board may determine by lot which bid shall be accepted per Public Contract Code 20117.

Nadia Q. Davies
Clerk of the Governing Board
Grossmont Union High School District

Bid# 2729

Lemon Grove Review
Feb. 12 & 19, 1998

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE
T.S. No. GM-36678-C
Loan No. 0301473005
YOU ARE IN DEFAULT UNDER A DEED OF TRUST DATED 4/30/92. UNLESS YOU TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY, IT MAY BE SOLD AT A PUBLIC SALE. IF YOU NEED AN EXPLANATION OF THE NATURE OF THE PROCEEDING AGAINST YOU, YOU SHOULD CONTACT A LAWYER.
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TRUSTOR: MELQUIADEZ MONTIEL, AN UNMARRIED MAN
Duly Appointed Trustee: EXECUTIVE TRUSTEE SERVICES, INC.
Recorded 5/5/92 as Instrument No. 1992-0265776 in Book , page of Official Records in the office of the Recorder of SAN DIEGO County, California.
Date of Sale: 3/5/98 at 12:00 PM
Place of Sale: AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE CITY HALL EAST
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Amount of unpaid balance and other charges: $153,930.68
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APN #: 503-482-88
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Date: January 29, 1998
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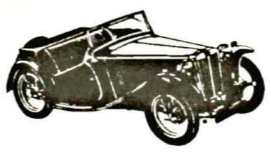

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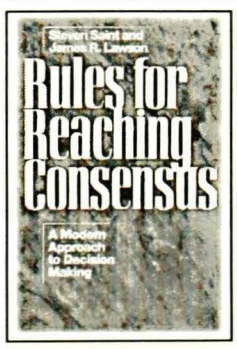

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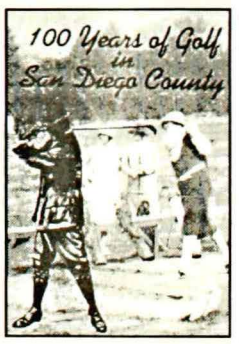

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'Hello! Dolly' takes small stage and makes it larger than life

by Paul Treske

For some, I suppose, the very idea of the Lamplighters Community Theatre putting on a full-fledged musical on its minuscule stage is absurd. Well, forget that! They've done it before, a few seasons back, with "Gypsy" and they did it again beautifully last weekend with the current production of Jerry Herman and Michael Stewart's "Hello Dolly!" It's a sure hit.

Taken from Thornton Wilder's stage play "The Matchmaker," "Dolly" follows the machinations of an attractive middle-aged widow Dolly Levi, who uses her role as the official matchmaker of Yonkers, New York to land for herself the town's richest and most eligible bachelor, the irascible Horace Vandergelder. He is dead set against marrying her, but in the end, is helpless against her locomotive-like wiles.

Filled with numerous charming musical numbers, the most famous of which is the title song, made famous several years ago by Louis Armstrong, "Dolly" is a delight of music and dance. Set in 1890, it is also filled with a swath of colorful period costumes which add to the piquant nostalgia of the piece.

The sure-handed direction of D. Larry Steckling is everywhere to be seen, in the charming and vital characterizations and the sweep and flow of the action which is non-stop and inventive. A hidden hero in the entire production is choreographer Scott Viets who makes a chorus of eight seem like something out of a Broadway show.

The cast, from top to bottom, does well despite, however, a few shortcomings that are hard to ignore. Starting at the top, Joan Kearns is a both physically and dramatically striking Dolly Levi. She is a tall and imposing stage presence who carries off the sly wiles of the character with ease and charm. Unfortunately, her vocalizing falls somewhat short of the needs of the role. Although she sang tunefully, she lacked the volume to belt out the bigger numbers and her lack of vocal range led her to periodically drop an octave when needing a high note. Despite this, however, her overall dynamic aura helped to at least partially compensate.

Scott Lubinski's Vandergelder could both act and sing and presented a marvelous version of the eternally irascible Yonkers merchant. His two clerks Cornelius and Barnaby, who are responsible for the show's outright comedy, were played to a "T" by Frank Remiatte and Joey Minich, a "Mutt & Jeff" combination who captured extremely well the nature of the two enslaved but yearning young men.

Their love interest during their venture into the big city was equally well played by Colette Thomas as Mrs. Molloy and Marianne Nevitt as her giggly assistant Minnie Fay. The latter, proved an exciting scene stealer with her endless vitality and dancing skills.

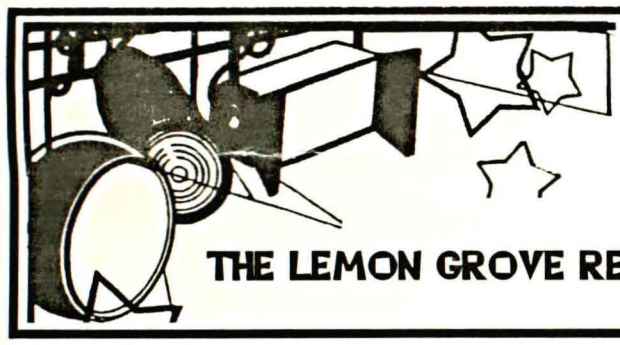
In other supporting roles were Kelly Ayers as the always weepy Ermangarde, Kenn Burnett, as her male friend Ambrose, Kimberly Garland who stepped into the role of Ernestine at the last moment from her job as rehearsal stage manager, Phil Simon as both the maitre-d and judge and John Donaldson in bits as the paperhanger and policeman.

High on any list of honors for this production are the eight dashing chorus members who often seemed to multiply into dozens before our eyes. They were Manuel and Tony Bejarano, Corrie Desmuke, Chrissy Johnson, Andy Overland, Amy Treat, Christopher Pederson and Lizette Kent.

"Hello Dolly" is filled with such pleasing musical numbers as "When the Parade Passes By," "Put on Your Sunday Coat," "Elegance," and, of course, the show-stopping title number in the Harmonia Gardens. Dual credit for these goes to Musical Director Gayle Dunne Davis and Choreographer Scott Viets. Set Design by Wiley Ellis was functional and the over-all production shepherded by producer Gladys Rongey is a total winner.

The production runs weekends through Mar. 15 with ticket information available at 464-4598.

Scott Lubinski (left) is Horace Vandergelder, who tries his darndest to resist the wiles of Joan Kerns as Dolly Levi.



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